

## Message Text

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ORIGIN MCT-02

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10  
NSAE-00 PA-02 ICA-20 SP-02 /063 R

DRAFTED BY M/CT:J T JOHNSON:PD  
APPROVED BY M/CT: AMBASSADOR QUainton  
EUR:R VINE  
PA/PRS:M A BADER

-----118073 261217Z /45

R 252251Z AUG 78  
FM SECSTATE WASHDC  
TO AMEMBASSY BERN  
AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMCONSUL ZURICH  
USMISSION GENEVA

UNCLAS STATE 217348

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: PINS

SUBJECT:DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING - AUGUST 25

1. FOR YOUR INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOLLOWING ARE  
EXCERPTS ON TWA - GENEVA HIJACKING INCIDENT FROM  
DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING FOR AUGUST 25, 1978.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THE HIJACKING -- US  
INVOLVEMENT, US POSITION?

A: AS YOU KNOW, THIS IS AN ONGOING AND QUICKLY DEVELOP-  
ING SITUATION, SO I MAY NOT HAVE WHAT'S UP TO THE MINUTE,  
BUT I WILL GIVE YOU WHAT I HAVE.

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-- THE HIJACKING OF TWA FLIGHT 830 TERMINATED AT 11:10  
EASTERN DAYLIGHT TIME WITH THE DEBARKATION OF ALL  
PASSENGERS AND CREW MEMBERS. THERE WERE NO INJURIES  
OR CASUALTIES IN THE INCIDENT, WHICH BEGAN AT APPROXI-  
MATELY 2:20 A.M., E.D.T.

-- THE PERSON OR PERSONS WHO PERPETRATED THIS INCIDENT

DEBARKED WITH THE OTHER PASSENGERS AND REMAIN UN-IDENTIFIED FOR THE MOMENT.

-- THE SWISS AUTHORITIES ARE CONDUCTING A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE THE GUILTY PARTY OR PARTIES. WE GREATLY APPRECIATE THE OUTSTANDING COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE OF THE AUTHORITIES WITH WHOM WE MAINTAIN CLOSE CONTACT THROUGHOUT THE INCIDENT.

-- AS TO THE UNITED STATES ROLE, THERE WAS, SOON AFTER THE INCIDENT BEGAN, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP HERE IN THE DEPARTMENT, BUT IT WAS AN INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP. IT WAS HEADED BY AMBASSADOR QUANTON. THEY WERE, OF COURSE, IN TOUCH WITH THE SWISS GOVERNMENT, WITH TWA, WITH THE VARIOUS AGENCIES HERE IN WASHINGTON CONCERNED. WE HAD, AS WELL, A DIRECT LINE ESTABLISHED BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND GENEVA TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION.

Q: ONE OF THEIR FIRST DEMANDS WAS THE RELEASE OF HESS. WAS THERE ANY COMMUNICATION WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE FOUR-POWER GROUP TO DISCUSS THE HESS CASE?

A: NOT THAT I'M AWARE OF.

Q: KEN, THEY SAID THEY HAD TIME BOMBS READY TO GO OFF  
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AT 12:30 OUR TIME.

A: THAT'S WHAT THEY ALLEGED.

Q: HAVE THEY EXPLODED?

A: NO, NOT THAT I KNOW OF. I ASSUME WE WOULD KNOW THAT. WHAT HAPPENED WAS THAT THE DEMANDS WERE PRESENTED IN WRITING, AND THEY WERE DROPPED SURREPTIOUSLY IN THE PLANE SO THAT IT WAS NOT CLEAR EXACTLY WHO WAS DOING THE THREATENING.

Q: HOW MANY NOTES WERE THERE?

A: THERE WERE TWO NOTES.

Q: HAVE WE ASKED OUR INTERAGENCY GROUP AS TO THE EXAMINATION OF BAGGAGE AND OTHER PERSONAL EFFECTS OF ALL PASSENGERS WHO BOARDED THIS PLANE BEFORE DEPARTURE?

A: I ASSUME THAT THE BAGGAGE AND THE PASSENGERS UNDERWENT A ROUTINE SECURITY CHECK, BUT I DON'T HAVE SPECIFIC

INFORMATION ON THAT. IT'S PROBABLY BEST ADDRESSED BY TWA.

Q: WELL, I WAS JUST WONDERING WHETHER THE AUTHORITIES WERE INVOLVED IN THIS, SINCE THIS INVOLVES THE AUTHORITIES IN TERMS OF INSPECTION, DOESN'T IT?

A: AS TO WHO ACTUALLY CARRIES OUT THE INSPECTION AT KENNEDY, I'M NOT ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN. I BELIEVE THIS IS THE AIRLINE ITSELF.

Q: DOES THIS APPEAR TO BE A HOAX?

A: BERNIE, I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING YET THAT WOULD INDICATE UNCLASSIFIED

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IT WAS A HOAX. IT CERTAINLY WAS TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY THE PEOPLE CONCERNED.

Q: KEN, AT THE TIME WHEN THIS APPEARED TO BE A SERIOUS THREAT, WAS THERE EVER ANY CONSIDERATION BY THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OF MEETING ANY OF THE DEMANDS BY THE HIJACKERS, SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING THE RELEASE OF SIRHAN SIRHAN?

A: WE WEREN'T IN A POSITION OF CONSIDERING THAT THE DEMANDS WERE BEING LEVIED DIRECTLY ON US. THIS WAS, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, A MATTER FOR THE SWISS GOVERNMENT SINCE IT WAS ON THEIR TERRITORY. THEY WERE THE ONES WHO WERE DIRECTLY INVOLVED FOR FINDING OUT WHAT THE DEMANDS OF THE PERSON OR PERSONS INVOLVED WERE AND, OF COURSE, KEPT US INFORMED. BUT WE DIDN'T CONSIDER THAT WE WERE THE PARTIES OF THE FIRST INSTANCE HERE AS TO WHO THESE DEMANDS WOULD BE LEVIED ON.

Q: KEN, HOW IS IT DETERMINED WHEN THE INTERAGENCY GROUP GOES INTO SESSION OR COMES TOGETHER?

A: WE HAVE, AS YOU KNOW, AN ADVISER ON TERRORISM MATTERS, AMBASSADOR QUANTON. THAT IS THE OFFICE IN WHICH THESE QUESTIONS CENTER WHEN AN INCIDENT DOES ARISE. THEY WOULD GET IN TOUCH WITH THE OTHER AGENCIES FOR CALLING TOGETHER THE INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP.

Q: KEN, HOW WAS IT DECIDED THAT THE PASSENGERS SHOULD DISEMBARK AT ONE POINT?

A: IT'S NOT CLEAR. WE DON'T HAVE THAT YET. I WILL ADD THAT WE HOPE FOR CLARIFYING INFORMATION AS THE DAY UNCLASSIFIED

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PROGRESSES. I WOULD ASSUME THAT WE WOULD HAVE IT. BUT  
RIGHT NOW WEDON'T KNOW.

Q: WAS THE UNITED STATES CONSULTED BEFORE THAT WAS TAKEN,

BECAUSE IT LOOKED LIKE AT THE TIME IT WAS A BIT OF A  
RISK SINCE THE HIJACKERS HAVEN'T BEEN IDENTIFIED.

A: WELL, HERE AGAIN WE KEPT IN TOUCH, BUT IT WAS A  
SWISS AND TWA RESPONSIBILITY. CHRISTOPHER

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS RELEASES  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 25 aug 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978STATE217348  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** J T JOHNSON:PD  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
20 Mar 2014  
**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014